DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 383 CG 025 769

AUTHOR Buri, John R.; And Others
TITLE Parental Hostility as a Predictor of Parental Authority and Adolescent Self-Esteem.
PUB DATE Aug 94
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (102nd, Los Angeles, CA, August 12-16, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Anger; Child Rearing; Family Life; *Father Attitudes; Higher Education; *Hostility; *Mother Attitudes; Nuclear Family; Parent Child Relationship; Personality Traits; Power Structure; *Self Esteem; Social Cognition
IDENTIFIERS Parental Dominance

ABSTRACT

Research shows that hostility may lead to deleterious consequences for health, anger, aggressive behavior, and interpersonal relationships. This study investigated the relation of parents' hostility levels to both the self-esteem (SE) of college-aged participants and the adolescents' phenomenological assessments of parental authority. The 199 college students for this study came from two-parent families. Participants completed four questionnaires: (1) a mothers' authority questionnaire, (2) a fathers' authority questionnaire, (3) a SE scale; and (4) a demographic information sheet. Each parent filled out the Cook and Medley Hostility Scale. When comparing fathers' and mothers' hostility, paternal hostility more strongly predicted patterns of authority exercised in the home (both authoritarianism and authoritativeness), and adolescent self-esteem. The psychological disposition of hostility appears to affect the overt behavioral and emotional expressions of men more than of women -- hostile fathers seem more apt to interact with their children in abrupt, demanding, and controlling ways. The findings suggest that the behavioral and emotional consequences of hostility are different for men and women, which agrees with previous studies. Included are three tables which summarize the statistical findings. Contains 23 references. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 374 383

Parental Hostility as a Predictor of Parental Authority and Adolescent Self-Esteem

John R. Buri and Kelly A. Dickinson
University of St. Thomas
Lynda M. Richtsmeier
University of North Carolina
Karen K. Komar
University of Arizona

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. R. Buri
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract: *When comparing fathers' and mothers' hostility [as measured by the Cook and Medley (1954) Hostility (Ho) Scale], fathers' Ho was more strongly predictive of: (a) the patterns of authority exercised in the home (both Authoritarianism and Authoritativeness), and (b) adolescent self-esteem. These findings suggest that the behavioral and emotional consequences of Ho are different for men and women, which is consistent with previous research in other areas of study. Analyses in the present study of Barefoot, Dodge, Peterson, Dahlstrom, and Williams (1989) Ho subset factors (i.e., Cynicism, Hostile Attributions, Hostile Affect, and Aggressive Responding) both supported these overall findings as well as helped to clarify them.*

Studies employing the MMPI-based Cook and Medley (1954) Hostility (Ho) Scale have implicated hostility in cardiovascular health problems in men (e.g., Barefoot, Dahlstrom, & Williams, 1983; Shekelle, Gale, Ostfeld, & Paul, 1983; Williams, Haney, Lee, Kong, Blumenthal, & Whalen, 1980) as well as in

---

Paper presented at the 102nd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, August, 1994.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be sent to John R. Buri, Department of Psychology, Mail #5001, University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105

CG025769

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

general mortality rates among men (e.g., Barefoot et al., 1983; Barefoot, Dodge, Peterson, Dahlstrom, & Williams, 1989; Shekelle et al., 1983). Furthermore, high Ho men (when compared to low Ho men) have been found to display greater levels of anger, irritation, and cardiovascular arousal when placed in circumstances involving interpersonal confrontation (e.g., Hardy & Smith, 1988; Smith & Allred, 1989; Suarez & Williams, 1989). Recently, Smith, Sanders, and Alexander (1990) extended these empirical findings of the toxic effects of hostility to the interpersonal relationships found in marriage. They reported that when placed in a high-conflict situation with their wives, high Ho men experienced greater anger and overt hostile behavior than did low Ho men; furthermore, the high Ho men were more apt to blame their wives for their disagreements. High Ho wives in the same high-conflict situation, however, were not found to differ from low Ho wives in anger or blame, and there was only a small (albeit significant) increase in the hostile behavior for these high Ho women.

Taken together these findings suggest that hostility may be a robust psychological disposition with pervasive deleterious consequences for health, anger, aggressive behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, there is evidence that the toxic effects of this hostility are particularly pronounced in men. With this in mind, the present study was undertaken to investigate the relation of hostility to an important area of emotional and behavioral functioning --- parenting.

Since previous researchers (e.g., Maccoby, 1980; Patterson, 1982; Patterson & Reid, 1984) had suggested deleterious consequences of general levels of irritability in the home, the present study was undertaken to investigate the

relation of parents' Ho levels to the self-esteem (SE) of college-aged participants. Furthermore, given the relation between adolescent SE and parental authority (e.g., Bachman, 1982; Buri, Louiselle, Misukanis, & Mueller, 1988; Coopersmith, 1967; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986), the present study also investigated the relation of parents' Ho scores to adolescents' phenomenological assessments of their parents' authority.

Several specific hypotheses have been generated. Patterson (1982) reported on parental irritability and aggressive responding and its relationship to forceful authority within the home. Similarly, Maccoby (1980) related behavioral measures of hostility to the less effective exercise of authority by parents. Therefore our first hypothesis is that high Ho scores by both fathers and mothers are directly related to authoritarianism and inversely related to authoritativeness. Furthermore, given the findings reported by Smith et al. (1990) that increased anger and hostile behavior were observed in high Ho men (but not high Ho women) when faced with interpersonal conflict, we are hypothesizing that these effects are stronger for fathers' Ho than for mothers' Ho. Another hypothesis derives from the findings reported by Coopersmith (1967) and Bachman (1982) that parental behavioral aggressiveness and adolescent SE are inversely related. Specifically it is hypothesized that there is an inverse relationship between Ho and SE; and again, we are anticipating that this relationship is stronger for fathers' Ho than for mothers' Ho. A further hypothesis has been suggested by the findings of Smith et al. (1990) that couples in which both individuals were low in Ho created expecially beneficent interactional patterns. Based upon these findings, we are proposing that adolescent levels of SE are especially high in those situations where both

fathers' and mothers' Ho scores are low. Finally we were interested in the exploratory investigation of the relation of Barefoot et al.'s (1989) specific Ho subset factors (i.e., Cynicism, Hostile Attributions, Hostile Affect, and Aggressive Responding) to parental authority and adolescent SE.

Method

Subjects

The participation of 289 college students (as part of an introductory psychology course requirement) and both their parents (through mailed questionnaires) was requested. The responses of 40 students were eliminated from the present analyses because their parents were divorced or separated. An additional five subjects were excluded from the study because of incomplete or inadequate participation. Finally, 45 students were eliminated because at least one of their parents declined the opportunity to participate. The remaining 199 students from intact families (110 women, 89 men) and both their parents participated through questionnaire responses.

Materials and Procedure

Each college-age participant was asked to complete four questionnaires that were presented in randomized order: (a) a mothers' authority questionnaire, (b) a fathers' authority questionnaire, (c) a SE scale, and (d) a demographic information sheet. Each parent was asked to complete the Cook and Medley (1954) Ho Scale.

Each of the research participants was told that we were investigating factors that are believed to influence SE in adolescents. They were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers and that all of their responses were anonymous; therefore they were encouraged to respond to each

item as honestly as possible. They were also instructed not to spend too much time on any one item since we were interested in their first reaction to each statement. They were also reminded of the importance of responding to every item on the questionnaires.

Parental authority. Distinctions proposed by Baumrind (1971) for three prototypes of parental authority (i.e., permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness) were employed by Buri (1991) to construct the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ consists of 10 permissive, 10 authoritarian, and 10 authoritative Likert-type items stated from the point of view of an individual appraising the authority exercised by his or her mother or father. Buri (1991) reported the following test-retest reliabilities (N = 61 over a two-week interval) and Cronbach alpha values (N = 185), respectively: .81 and .75 for Mothers' Permissiveness; .86 and .85 for Mothers' Authoritarianism; .78 and .82 for Mothers' Authoritativeness; .77 and .74 for Fathers' Permissiveness; .85 and .87 for Fathers' Authoritarianism; and .92 and .85 for Fathers' Authoritativeness.

Each college-age participant completed two forms of the PAQ, one to evaluate the authority exercised by the mother and one to evaluate the authority of the father. Examples of items from the permissive scale are: "My mother/father has always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want," and "As I was growing up my mother/father allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her/him." Examples of items from the authoritarian scale are: "As I was growing up my mother/father did not allow me to question any decision that

she/he had made," and "My mother/father has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to." Examples from the authoritative scale are: "My mother/father has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable," and "My mother/father had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but she/he was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family."

Global self-esteem. Each college-age participant also completed the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS; Fitts, 1965), which consists of 100 self-descriptive statements to which subjects responded on a 5-point scale ranging from *completely false* of me (1) to *completely true* of me (5). The TSCS is a widely-used research tool for SE studies (Marsh & Richards, 1988; Mitchell, 1985; Roid & Fitts, 1988). The Total Positive SE Score was derived for each participant in the present study. As operationalized by Fitts,

> ...persons with high scores tend to like themselves, feel that they are persons of value and worth, have confidence in themselves, and act accordingly. People with low scores are doubtful about their own worth; see themselves as undesirable;...and have little faith or confidence in themselves (p. 2).

Fitts reported a test-retest reliability for the Total Positive Score of .92. An internal consistency estimate of .92 for this Total Score was reported by Stanwyck and Garrison (1982). Also, Roid and Fitts (1988) reported a coefficient alpha value of .94 for this Total Score scale. Sample TSCS items are: "I am an important person to my friends and family" and " I am not the

person that I would like to be."

Demographic information. The student participants also provided information concerning (a) their gender, (b) their age, (c) whether one of their parents had died, and (d) whether their parents were divorced or separated.

Hostility. Copies of the Ho scale (Cook & Medley, 1954) were mailed home to each of the parents along with a letter explaining the research project and soliciting their participation. A stamped envelope for convenience in returning the completed questionnaires was also included with the questionnaires and the letter.

The Ho scale consists of 50 items from the MMPI. This scale was originally constructed to discriminate teacher rapport with students. Cook and Medley reported an internal consistency of .86. More recently, Smith and Frohm (1985) reported a Cronbach coefficient alpha value of .82. Test-retest reliabilities reported by Barefoot et al. (1983) and Shekelle et al. (1983) were both approximately r = .85. Sample Ho items are: "I think a great many people exaggerate their misfortunes in order to gain sympathy and help of others" and "People often disappoint me."

Results and Discussion

Bivariate correlational analyses were used to test the hypotheses that: (a) high Ho scores are predictive of high parental authoritarianism and low authoritativeness, (b) there is an inverse relationship between parents' Ho and SE, and (c) these effects are stronger for fathers' Ho than for mothers' Ho. The Ho item subsets were also designated as predictor variables and were correlated with the authority variables and with SE. These bivariate correla-

tions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations of Parental Authority Patterns and Adolescent Self-Esteem with Mothers' and Fathers' Hostility (Ho) and Ho Subset Factors

	Mothers' Ho Factors				
	Overall Ho	Cynicism	Hostile Attributions	Hostile Affect	Aggressive Responding
Mothers' Permissiveness	.057	.142*	.004	-.049	.031
Mothers' Authoritarianism	.096	-.032	.133	.161*	.130
Mothers' Authoritativeness	-.154*	-.104	-.063	-.131	-.160*
Adolescent Self-Esteem	-.063	-.140*	.012	-.054	-.080
	Fathers' Ho Factors				
	Overall Ho	Cynicism	Hostile Attributions	Hostile Affect	Aggressive Responding
Fathers' Permissiveness	-.132	-.036	-.189	-.109	.010
Fathers' Authoritariansim	.248***	.184**	.236***	.139	.176*
Fathers' Authoritativeness	-.307***	-.248***	-.264***	-.122	-.211**
Adolescent Self-Esteem	-.210**	-.118	-.232***	-.150*	-.038

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

As indicated in Table 1, Ho and the Ho subset factors were not strongly predictive of the mothers' authority patterns, yielding the following marginally significant relationships: (a) between Ho and Authoritativeness [r = -.154, $p < .05$], (b) between Cynicism and Permissiveness [r = .142, $p < .05$], (c) between Hostile Affect and Authoritarianism [r = .161, $p < .05$], and (d) between Aggressive Responding and Authoritativeness [r = -.160, $p < .05$]. Similarly for the adolescent SE data, the only Ho variable that was significantly related to SE was mothers' Cynicism [r = -.140, $p < .05$].

On the other hand, for the fathers' data (also presented in Table 1), Ho and several of the Ho subset factors were strongly related to the authority variables and to SE. Ho was predictive of Authoritarianism [r = .248, $p < .001$], Authoritativeness [r = -.307, $p < .001$], and SE [r = .210, $p < .01$]. Cynicism was strongly related to Authoritarianism [r = .184, $p < .01$] and to Authoritativeness [r = -.248, $p < .001$]. The Hostile Attributions factor was predictive of Authoritarianism [r = .236, $p < .001$], Authoritativeness [r = -.264, $p < .001$], and SE [r = -.232, $p < .001$]. Hostile Affect was inversely related to SE [r = -.150, $p < .05$]. Finally, the Aggressive Responding factor was predictive of Authoritarianism [r = .176, $p < .05$] and Authoritativeness [r = -.211, $p < .01$].

These results suggest that the Ho construct actually manifests itself differently for men than for women. Such results are consistent with the findings of Smith et al. (1990), who reported that in a marriage context, Ho was much more predictive of overt indices of hostility for men than for women. They found that high Ho men were more apt to respond to situations of interpersonal conflict with anger, blame, and hostile behavior than were low Ho men.

For the women, however, differences between high Ho and low Ho individuals in these conflict situations were negligible. Thus the psychological disposition of Ho appears to affect the overt behavioral and emotional expressions of men more than of women. Similarly in the present study, adolescents' appraisals of mothers' and fathers' authority as well as adolescents' SE were more strongly related to Ho variables in the fathers than in the mothers, thus suggesting that these Ho gender differences extend to the context of parenting.

In an effort to determine the fathers' Ho and Ho subset factors that best predict parental authority and SE, hierarchical regression analyses were completed. In these analyses, statistically significant Ho subset factors were entered into the regression equations first (and these were entered based upon the strength of the bivariate relationships) and only after each of these was entered did we enter the Ho factor. This order of entry was based upon the findings of Barefoot et al. (1989) that particular subset factor combinations were of greater predictive significance in some contexts than was the total Ho factor. Summaries of these hierarchical regression analyses are presented in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, the factor of fathers' Hostile Attributions was highly predictive ($p < .001$) of fathers' Authoritarianism, fathers' Authoritativeness, and adolescent SE. Furthermore, only in the case of Authoritativeness did any of the other factors add significantly to the predictive ability of this Hostile Attributions factor; in this one instance, fathers' Cynicism accounted for an additional 2% of the variance [$F = 4.19$, $p < .05$].

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Fathers' Data of Authoritarianism, Authoritativeness, and Self-Esteem on the Ho Subset Factors and Ho

Independent variables	Dependent variables	$F(1,194)$	p	Partial r^2
	Authoritarianism			
Hostile Attributions		11.67	<.001	.056
Cynicism		1.40	*ns*	.007
Aggressive Responding		1.95	*ns*	.009
Ho		0.16	*ns*	.001
	Authoritativeness			
Hostile Attributions		15.01	<.001	.069
Cynicism		4.19	<.05	.019
Aggressive Responding		2.42	*ns*	.011
Ho		0.45	*ns*	.002
	Self-Esteem			
Hostile Attributions		11.20	<.001	.054
Hostile Affect		1.46	*ns*	.007
Ho		0.13	*ns*	.001

Clearly the Hostile Attributions factor is an important variable in the exercise of authority by fathers as well as in the SE of their adolescents. Barefoot et al. (1989) operationalized this Hostile Attributions variable as "a tendency to interpret the behavior of others as intended to harm the respondent" (p. 48). Thus this factor is ralated to the suspicion of others and the perception that others' intentions are not to be trusted. Examples of Hostile Attribution items are: "I commonly wonder what hidden reason another person may have for doing something nice for me" and "My way of doing things is apt to be misunderstood by others." These findings suggest that when fathers have a disposition of Hostile Attributions, they are more apt to interact with their children in abrupt, demanding, and controlling ways (i.e., authoritarianism). Such a suggestion is consistent with the findings that this Hostile Attributions factor is related to reactive aggression in children (Barefoot et al., 1989). Thus Ho (and especially the subset factor of Hostile Attributions) appears to be an important psychological disposition in the authority patterns of fathers, and concomitantly, in the self-esteem of their adolescents.

The final hypothesis stated above proposed that familial situations in which both fathers' and mothers' Ho scores are low will have an especially positive impact upon adolescent SE. To test this hypothesis, we regressed SE on fathers' Ho, mothers' Ho, and the interaction of fathers' and mothers' Ho. These analyses are summarized in Table 3. As can be seen in this table, fathers' Ho accounted for a significant proportion of SE variance [F 9.05, $p < .005$], but neither mothers' Ho nor the interaction of fathers' and mothers' Ho significantly augmented this R^2 value.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Self-Esteem on the Ho Scores and the Interaction of Fathers' and Mothers' Ho

	Dependent variable		
	Self-esteem		
Independent variables	$F(1,194)$	p	Partial r^2
Fathers' Ho	9.05	<.005	.044
Mothers' Ho	0.15	*ns*	.001
Fathers' Ho x Mothers' Ho	0.47	*ns*	.004

References

Bachman, J. G. (1982). Family relationships and self-esteem. In M. Rosenberg & H. B. Kaplan (Eds.), *Social psychology of the self-concept* (pp. 356-362). Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson.

Barefoot, J. C., Dahlstrom, W. G., & Williams, R. B. (1983). Hostility, CHD incidence, and total mortality: A 25-year follow-up study of 255 physicians. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 45,* 59-63.

Barefoot, J. C., Dodge, K. A., Peterson, B. L., Dahlstrom, W. G., & Williams, R. B. (1989). The Cook-Medley hostility scale: Item content and ability to predict survival. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 51,* 46-57.

Buri, J. R. (1991). Parental authority questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 57,* 110-119.

Buri, J. R., Louiselle, P. A., Misukanis, T. M., & Mueller, R. A. (1988). Effects of parental authoritarianism and authoritativeness on self-esteem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 14,* 271-282.

Cook, W. W., & Medley, D. M. (1954). Proposed hostility and pharisaic-virtue scores for the MMPI. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 38,* 414-418.

Coopersmith, S. (1967). *The antecedents of self-esteem.* San Francisco, CA: Freeman Press.

Fitts, W. (1965). *Tennessee self-concept scale.* Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.

Gecas, V., & Schwalbe, M. L. (1986). Parental behavior and adolescent self-esteem. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48,* 37-46.

Hardy, J. D., & Smith, T. W. (1988). Cynical hostility and vulnerability to disease: Social support, life stress, and physiological response to conflict. *Health Psychology, 7,* 447-459.

Maccoby, E. E. (1980). *Social development: Psychological growth and the parent-child relationship.* NY: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich.

Marsh, H. W., & Richards, G. E. (1988). Tennessee self-concept scale: Reliability, internal structure, and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55,* 612-624.

Mitchell, J. V. (1985). *The ninth mental measurement yearbook.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Patterson, G. R. (1982). *Coercive family process.* Eugene, OR: Castalia Press.

Patterson, G. R., & Reid, J. B. (1984). Social interactional processes within the family: The study of the moment-by-moment family transactions in which human social development is imbedded. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 5,* 237-262.

Roid, G. H., & Fitts, W. H. (1988). *Tennessee self-concept scale: Revised manual.* Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.

Shekelle, R. B., Gale, M., Ostfeld, A. M., & Paul, O. (1983). Hostility, risk of coronary heart disease, and mortality. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 45,* 109-114.

Smith, T. W., & Allred, K. D. (1989). Blood pressure responses during social interaction in high and low cynically hostile males. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 12,* 135-143.

Smith, T. W., & Frohm, K. D. (1985). What's so unhealthy about hostility?: Construct validity and psychosocial correlates of the Cook and Medley Ho scale. *Health Psychology, 4,* 503-520.

Smith, T. W., Sanders, J. D., & Alexander, J. F. (1990). What does the Cook and Medley hostility scale measure?: Affect, behavior, and attributions in the marital context. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58,* 699-708.

Stanwyck, D. J., & Garrison, W. M. (1982). Detection of faking on the Tennessee self-concept scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 46,* 426-431.

Suarez, E. C., & Williams, R. B. (1989). Situational determinants of cardiovascular and emotional reactivity in high and low hostile men. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 51,* 404-418.

Williams, R. B., Jr., Haney, T. L., Lee, K. L., Kong, Y., Blumenthal, J., & Whalen, R. (1980). Type A behavior, hostility, and coronary atherosclerosis. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 42*, 539-549.